



CIRCA Report – Climate & Equity Grant

Nonprofit Accountability Group

2024



Connecticut Institute for Resilience
and Climate Adaptation



Sponsored by a Climate & Equity grant from the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA). CIRCA is a partnership between the University of Connecticut and the State of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. More information can be found at: www.circa.uconn.edu

Report Narrative Template

Grant Project Activities:

- What activities did your organization complete using Climate & Equity funds?

The Nonprofit Accountability Group became a part of a statewide coalition of climate activists, collaborating with Sierra Club CT, 350 CT, Connecticut Citizens Action Group, CT Renews in meetings, events, and community projects. During this time, our organization hosted quarterly climate education workshops for youth and community members and hired an intern to manage office hours and provide input on racial equity and youth participation at climate and environmental justice-related meetings. In March NAG facilitated an Energy Narrative discussion series focused on tenant energy advocacy and actively participated in the Stop Enbridge Project Maple meetings. Additionally, the Nonprofit Accountability Group launched a Little Free Library dedicated to environmentalism and sustainability, serving as a platform to reduce waste by allowing residents to exchange common household items that might otherwise end up in landfills. As part of the Insure Our Future campaign with CCAG, NAG worked alongside activists and organized by showing up to hold the insurance industry accountable for its role in the climate crisis. We organized a Salt Smart Workshop in collaboration with FRWA, participated in multiple climate rallies to raise awareness about climate justice in the community, and joined the BRACE Climate and Health Equity Coalition. The Nonprofit Accountability Group sponsored Transit Equity Day on February 5th, promoting the lowering of emissions in marginalized communities. Furthermore, our organization established a working partnership with the Trinity Environmental and Climate Justice (TEACJ) group to continue advancing these initiatives.

- **Please indicate any important project milestones (such as hiring a staff member, holding a workshop series, completing a draft plan, etc.).**

A significant milestone for the Nonprofit Accountability Group was the hiring of an intern to work 10 hours a week. This addition to the team played a crucial role in building the organization's capacity and provided much-needed relief from administrative duties. The intern managed office hours, attended climate and environmental justice-related meetings, and provided valuable input on racial equity and youth participation in the organization's initiatives.

Our recent efforts have focused on several key project milestones, including successfully engaging in a series of workshops on housing, healthcare, and environmental justice. These workshops provided valuable information and resources to the community, reinforcing our commitment to environmental justice. We also conducted extensive community outreach, raising awareness through tabling. Additionally, we collaborated with other environmental justice organizations, strengthening our collective impact in advocating for sustainable and equitable solutions.

- **Where did your organization complete activities? Please indicate any project sites (specific locations if possible, or general neighborhoods). Feel free to add any maps or photos.**

A majority of the Nonprofit Accountability Group's activities were conducted at the former office space on the West End of Hartford, which was closed after grant funding ended. Additional project sites included collaborations with the Sierra Club and CCAG, events at the Connecticut State Capitol, and the Energy Narrative series held at the Swift Factory in Hartford and in New Haven in partnership with PURA and the tenant and energy advocacy group. Our organization also engaged in virtual meetings on Zoom. Key neighborhoods involved in the initiatives included the West End and North End of Hartford.

Grant Project Outcomes:

- **What outcomes resulted from the grant project activities?**
- **Was your organization able to achieve your project goal? If yes, please explain how the outcomes of your project achieved the goal described in your organization's project application; if not, please explain the challenges that prevented the goal from being achieved.**

- **Was your organization able to engage the community described in your organization's project application? If yes, please describe the community engagement involved in your project.**
- **Please use specific metrics wherever you can (for example, number of outreach meetings held, number of trees planted, number of community residents reached, number and names of partner organizations, etc.)**

The grant project led to several significant outcomes for the Nonprofit Accountability Group, aligning with the goal of advancing equity in Connecticut by promoting clean air and educating frontline communities, such as Black, Indigenous, People of Color, trans, disabled, and young people. These communities were provided with the tools to effectively adapt to the effects of a changing climate.

One of the key outcomes was the successful hosting and attending of 24 outreach meetings on a variety of climate-related topics, ranging from energy assistance to clean air. These meetings were instrumental in engaging the target communities and raising awareness about the intersection of energy efficiency and economic challenges. For instance, the discussions highlighted how higher energy bills often reduce budgets for other essential needs, particularly in urban heat islands where cooling problems disproportionately affect communities already burdened by historical and systemic inequities such as segregation, zoning restrictions, lack of access to capital, and redlining.

Through these activities, the organization was able to onboard new organizations for climate work and expanded the network of climate activists and increased the presence of people of color in decision-making spaces. This is especially significant given the historical lack of diversity in climate activism, particularly among those most impacted by climate issues.

Our activities also led to the establishment of a community hub for sustainability, including the launch of a Little Free Library dedicated to environmentalism. This hub not only served as an educational resource but also provided a platform for community members to exchange items and reduce waste, further contributing to sustainability efforts.

Overall, the outcomes of this grant project demonstrate the organization's success in achieving its project goals by effectively engaging the community, promoting equity, and increasing awareness and participation in climate activism among historically marginalized groups.

Capacity-Building Progress:

- **Community capacity-building: How did your project help to increase the capacity of vulnerable communities in Connecticut to mitigate, plan for, and respond to climate change impacts?**
- **Organization capacity-building: Did you learn any lessons / make any connections / develop any resources through this project that will help your organization do its work more effectively in the future?**
- **Knowledge-sharing: Do you have any advice for other organizations doing similar projects?**

Community Capacity-Building:

The project significantly increased the capacity of vulnerable communities in Connecticut to mitigate, plan for, and respond to climate change impacts. By participating in 24 outreach meetings on topics like energy assistance and clean air, we provided these communities—particularly Black, Indigenous, People of Color, trans, disabled, and young people—with the knowledge and tools necessary to adapt to the effects of a changing climate. These efforts included raising awareness about energy efficiency and its direct impact on household budgets, especially in urban heat islands where cooling challenges are prevalent. The project also fostered community resilience by establishing a sustainability hub, which served as both an educational resource and a platform for reducing waste through the exchange of household items. This hub empowered residents to take action in their own neighborhoods, thereby strengthening community ties and collective capacity to address climate-related challenges.

Organization Capacity-Building:

Through this project, our organization gained valuable insights into more effective community engagement strategies. We learned the importance of tailoring our outreach efforts to the specific needs of the communities we serve, such as focusing on energy efficiency and economic challenges that resonate with their daily lives. Additionally, the project facilitated new connections with other organizations, including those that were newly onboarded for climate work. These partnerships will be crucial for future initiatives, as they enhance our network and amplify our impact. The experience also highlighted the value of hiring dedicated staff, like the intern who provided administrative support and contributed to capacity-building efforts, enabling us to manage more activities and reach more people.

Knowledge-Sharing:

For other organizations undertaking similar projects, we advise focusing on building strong, trust-based relationships with the communities you aim to serve. Understanding the specific challenges they face—such as the intersection of climate change and economic inequality—is essential for developing effective outreach and educational programs. Additionally, consider establishing a physical or virtual community hub where resources can be shared, and residents can actively participate in sustainability efforts. Lastly, don't underestimate the power of collaboration; partnering with other organizations can expand your reach and resources, ultimately leading to a greater collective impact.